

STOWLANGTOFT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

**MONDAY 17 MAY 2021 AT 7.00 PM
ST GEORGE'S CHURCH, THE STREET**

The Annual Parish meeting was held in St George's Church to ensure Covid 19 restrictions were adhered to.

The Chair welcomed all present and thanked everyone for their patience during the lockdown period when the meetings had been held via Zoom.

Present: Cllrs I Cassidy (Vice Chair), D D'Lima (Chair), J Catchpole, H Godfrey, Mrs J Godfrey and J Orlopp. Mrs A Bryant (clerk) was also in attendance. Members of the public also attended.

1 **Apologies for absence:** Apologies for absence were received from District Cllr Richardson and County Cllr Mellen who hoped to arrive for the full Parish Council meeting due to a clash with neighbouring Parish Council meetings.

2 **Minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2019**

The Chair advised that there had not been an annual meeting in 2020 due to the pandemic, therefore the 2019 minutes were before the meeting for approval. Cllr Cassidy proposed that the minutes of the meeting dated 13 May 2019 be approved. Cllr Orlopp seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

3 **County Councillor's report**

County Cllr Mrs Storey submitted the following annual report for Thedwastre North, which the Chair presented: -

"Traditionally I look back at the previous year and see what has been happening and maybe look forward to the next year. This time last year the country had been in lockdown for just over a month and we were enjoying some lovely weather. For some there was enforced 'holiday' – while on furlough from their normal employment, or in some cases 'let go'. Others were 'shielding' and not allowed to go out. In this area we were lucky to have lovely countryside for people to walk in.

Suffolk County Council introduced the Tribe app so that people in the country could sign up to help others in their area. By far the most efficient systems were those introduced at a local level. The Parish Council, the church and other volunteer groups in our villages leapt into action to make sure that the vulnerable were located and looked after. Many groups were set up around the area, some on a formal footing, others less so. In this year we have seen many new friendships formed and a greater community involvement for the community good.

A group of people that are often over-looked are those who have kept working throughout – the shop workers, care staff, delivery drivers, emergency crews and admin staff. Many admin workers have worked from home and have tried to maintain a professional manner while dogs are barking, and children are playing in the background. There are many funny stories about things going on in the background of online meetings.

With less traffic on the roads that did not stop the work of Suffolk Highways – it did mean that they had to work in a different way. This will have been seen when two or three vehicles turned up to do a repair. Social distancing meant that the vans could not be full of people – often there was only one person per vehicle. This had led to some adverse comments, but most people understood why.

The majority of people in the Thedwastre North division are under the care of the Woolpit Health Centre. They have received national recognition for the 'drive through' Covid vaccination clinics and deservedly so. The doctors acknowledge that it could not have been done without the support of local businesses and the army of 40 or so volunteers. There are so many people and organisations to thank for getting us through this incredible year and I cannot name them all.

With the Suffolk County Council Elections taking place on 6 May the locality budgets expenditure was removed from the SCC website. In 2020/2021, Suffolk's County Councillors were given a locality budget of £600,000, divided between them; each councillor has £8,000 to spend. Councillors are able to make recommendations about funding from this budget for local projects in their division, which should benefit the community. This year the grants that have been made in Thedwastre North include: -

Finningham Parish Council – speed Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) £2,000

Great Ashfield Parish Council – resurface village hall car park £1,000

Westhorpe Parish Council – computer and equipment £750

Westhorpe Parish Council – VAS £2,000

Badwell Ash Parish Council – VAS £2,000

Stowlangtoft Church – electrical and drainage works £1,000

Great Ashfield Parish Council – Quiet Lanes posts £960

SCC Licensing / Highways – dropped kerb in Woolpit £300

There is also a commitment from 2019 for £5,000 towards heating/cooling and sound/lighting improvements for Norton Village Hall. There will be a new budget allocation after the May 2021 election.

Many thanks for the work of Parish Council members and the Parish Clerks. To be a parish councillor can be a thankless task. So, I wish to record my grateful thanks to all those people who have devoted many hours to reading through agenda's, minutes, planning documents, other letters and correspondence in order to make a difference to their communities. My thanks also go to the parish clerks who have kept me informed of issues arising when I have not been able to be at the meetings in person, or on Zoom.

And finally from me...it has been my great honour and privilege to serve the people of Elmswell and Woolpit since 2002 as the councillor for Thedwastre South and then all the other villages as the councillor for Thedwastre North since 2005. There have been many challenges and accomplishments, but my regret is that I never got the Northern by-pass for Elmswell.

The Parish Council noted the report and thanked Jane for all her hard work over the years. The Parish Council also noted that Cllr Andy Mellen had been elected to the Thedwastre North division.

4 **District Councillor's report(s)**

Cllr D'Lima, in District Cllr Richardson's absence, presented the report, previously circulated. A copy is attached to the minutes for information.

District Cllr Mrs Turner presented her report, previously circulated. A copy is attached to the minutes for information. She added that there were several business support grants available, which are outlined below: -

Government Restart Grant

The Restart Grant scheme replaces the Local Restrictions Support Grant scheme and aims to support businesses registered for Business Rates that offer in-person services, where the main service and activity takes place in a fixed rate-paying premises, such as: Non-essential retail, Hospitality, Accommodation, Leisure, Personal care, Gym & Sport.

Discretionary Restart Grant

The Discretionary Restart Grant is open to businesses unable to access the Government Restart Grant, but who may have costs associated with reopening their business or to resume trading at pre-Covid levels following the lifting of lockdown restrictions.

Back to Business Grant

This grant is for businesses to support their recovery post covid by expanding or diversifying. There is a particular focus on businesses that will deliver a wider economic benefit to their local economy. The Back to Business Grant is up to £25,000 and we are asking businesses to submit their expression of interest in receiving this grant.

The Local Restriction Support Grant (closed) Addendum and Additional Restriction Grants are still open for businesses significantly financially impacted by the lockdown period from 16 February – 31 March, but applications must be submitted by 31 May 2021.

Additional information is available at:

Website: <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/business/business-rates/grant-funding-schemes/>

Email: discretionarybusinessgrant@babermidsuffolk.gov.uk

Telephone: 01473 296444.

5 **Police report**

The Parish Council noted the Police report which was also available online at <https://www.suffolk.police.uk/your-area/snt-newsletters>.

The Clerk reported that the theft of the George V post collection box had been reported. The crime reference number was 37/15925/21.

6 **Annual Reports from Village Groups**

Parochial Church Council

There was no update from the PCC.

The Chair welcomed Jane Hatton and Simon Wiles from the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) to the meeting. Simon gave a brief background about the CCT and explained that the CCT would be working with Reverend Katherine Valentine and the parishioners of Stowlangtoft to secure the future of St George's church.

Jane and Simon had met with various representatives from the village and discussed proposals for moving forward. The Parish Council noted that it was hoped the Church would be opened at weekends with the help of Ros Keeper. Simon reported that the introduction of water and toilet facilities had been raised as a key improvement.

(District Cllr Mrs Turner left the meeting at 7.10 pm)

Jane reported that the CCT had produced a questionnaire which they would distribute to all households. There would be a service in St George's on 30 May 2021 and an open day was planned for 10 July 2021.

Jane explained that in discussions with Reverend Valentine, the issue of publicity had been raised. There is a parish magazine, however it does not go to all households within Stowlangtoft. Reverend Valentine had suggested that the Parish Council could perhaps contribute £200 towards the magazine and ensure all households received a copy. **The Chair agreed to discuss the suggestion under finance at the main Parish Council meeting.**

(Jane Hatton and Simon Wiles left the meeting at 7.20 pm)

Community Fund

Cllr Orlopp reported that the community fund had agreed to contribute towards the church clock repair.

7 **Chair's Report**

Cllr D'Lima, as Chair, wished to thank his fellow Councillors for their continued hard work over the past, unprecedented year. He acknowledged how difficult it had been due to the pandemic and having to attend meetings via Zoom. He also wished to record his thanks to Nigel Kaines for his 25 + years as a Councillor and Chair, admitting he had earned his retirement.

Finally, the Chair wished to record his thanks to Amy, the Clerk for her hard work over the past year, ensuring the Parish Council continued to operate and meet within the ever-changing legislation. He added, with regret, that Amy had sadly submitted her resignation due to an increased workload in her day job and in her home life. Her last meeting would be in September 2021, but she would continue to be involved with the village as part of HART Farm Services.

The Parish Council noted that an advert would be placed on the noticeboard and sent to SALC for distribution.

8 **Date of next meeting:** Monday 16 May 2022 at 7.30 pm. The venue would be confirmed.

The meeting concluded at 7.22 pm.

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Chair

District Councillor's Report: Harry Richardson

As Mid Suffolk District Council did not meet in April I have included below a summary of the major updates across the district:

Covid-19

With the recent easing of lockdown restrictions, we are now seeing the gradual, welcome re-opening of our towns and high streets, as we continue to administer financial support to business across our districts.

Since March 2020, 7,589 grants worth £36,694,834 have been paid out to businesses in Babergh and 6,507 business grants worth £31,513,835 paid out in Mid Suffolk.

Now, there are further one-off Government Restart Grants of up to £18,000 available to help businesses reopen following lockdown, with a larger Back to Business Grant (offering up to £25,000) due to launch soon.

We are also continuing to encourage everyone to protect themselves, and others, by getting tested twice a week as part of the fight against coronavirus. There is now, however, far greater availability of home testing, with kits now available from libraries and pharmacies across Suffolk.

Lateral flow devices (LFD) can now be obtained free from any library in the county, subject to stock availability and opening times. Similarly, more than 130 NHS pharmacies across Suffolk will be taking part in the Pharmacy Collect scheme, where people can collect kits free of charge.

Home, But Not Alone

We have now received confirmation from the Collaborative Communities Board that Home, But Not Alone will remain in place until at least June, in line with the expectation to enter the fourth stage of the Government's Roadmap on 21st June.

Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities

The Government recently updated guidance for those managing community centres, village halls and other community facilities to reflect step two of the Roadmap out of lockdown. Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) have also updated their website to include an appendix detailing when activities, including Parish Council meetings, can lawfully resume again in community facilities.

Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

There are many exceptional volunteer groups across Mid Suffolk who have been instrumental in our district's response to Covid-19. Whilst we continue to recognise and support their ongoing efforts, nominations are also now open for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, providing further opportunity to show appreciation to the volunteers who've made a real difference in our communities.

I hope that this report has been useful but if a member of the Parish Council wishes to discuss any of the above further then please do not hesitate to contact me via the email address below.

Cllr Harry Richardson JP

Mid Suffolk District Councillor for Thurston Ward

Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing

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District Councillor Report: May 2021

6 th May Elections	<p>Election day is 6th May. As well as County Council elections there is also the election for the Police and Crime Commissioner and some Neighbourhood Plan referenda. The count for the County Council elections will take place on Friday 7th, the PCC on Saturday 8th and the Neighbourhood Plans on Monday 10th.</p> <p>Due to these elections, no MSDC Council meetings have taken place during the purdah period other than regulatory committee meetings.</p>
Future format of Council Meetings	<p>The legislation allowing virtual meetings for local government expires on 7th May, but the COVID regulations do not allow meetings in person until after 17th May. There is an appeal about extending the legislation for virtual meetings at the end of April, so we await further instructions about how meetings will be conducted next month.</p>
COVID community testing	<p>The first phase of COVID community testing ended on 31st March, and an altered programme is now in place until the end of June. Local testing sites at Elmswell, Needham Market, Eye and Debenham were due to close on 16th April. Lateral flow testing kits are now available in many libraries and pharmacies and people can do them at home.</p>
Business Support Grants	<p>A significant new grant fund has just been launched by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils. This is to support the recovery of local businesses reopening after lockdown but unable to access the Government's Restart Grant scheme.</p> <p>The grant will be a one-off payment of up to £18,000 for eligible businesses depending on the scale and size of business, impact of Covid, permitted opening dates and anticipated reopening costs. More details are available on the website. https://www.babergh.gov.uk/business/business-rates/grant-funding-schemes/</p>
Council support for members of the public.	<p>Despite the closure of our customer access points, our Customer Service team has continued to offer emergency face-to-face appointments for those who, for whatever reason, cannot be helped over the phone or remotely. Now that lockdown is easing, more face-to-face appointments will be available to book. Perspex screens have been installed at the customer contact office in Stowmarket and staff will be regularly tested.</p>
TPO on Elmswell Oak Tree	<p>A TPO has been served to protect an oak tree on School Road, Elmswell which was at risk due to highways improvements necessary to enable the development of up to 86 new homes north of School Road.</p>
Potholes	<p>Complained to Highways about the dangerous state of Thurston's roads. No satisfactory response. Still waiting for Highways to respond to latest email.</p>

Cllr Wendy Turner

Mid Suffolk District Councillor (Green Party)

Ward of Thurston

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